

CHARLIE HUEBNER

Good morning, and Happy Mothers' Day to all the moms out there. Special shoutout to my mom who does an amazing job of playing the organ and directing the choir every week. Just my unbiased opinion.

Being a member of this congregation has taught me that Calvary is a place of learning. Across the parking lot is Grizzlies Prep, where middle school boys are being challenged daily. A floor below us is Calvary Place, where little children learn to play together and stand in line. It's where our neighbors experiencing homelessness learn that they are loved with the help of our extensive outreach ministry. It's where I've learned how to sing all four choral parts during my long and confusing voice change. It's where I've learned that standing, sitting, and kneeling really is a workout. It's where I've learned to love.

In today's Gospel, Jesus gives the disciples *his* commandment, "that you love one another as I have loved you." After eight years here, I hear Calvary's commandment: that I go out into the world and love as I have been loved here.

I did not want to accept that love at first, though. When my parents told my older sister Sloan and me that we would be switching parishes and attending Calvary Episcopal Church in downtown Memphis, I was upset. I had grown fond of our previous church, Church of the Holy Apostles, and found my group of friends there. I didn't want to restart; that was scary. For my first few Sundays at Calvary, I was introduced to the youth my age. Two of the boys I was introduced to were none other than Jackson Seltzer and Mason Graves. They immediately made me feel welcome and at home as they embodied the loving spirit of Calvary. They clearly did a good job, as they have grown from

acquaintances to two of my best friends who hold a very special place in my heart and only made me more grateful to be at Calvary.

I have also felt Calvary's love through singing in the Calvary Choir. After graduating from the Boys and Girls Choir, I was promoted to the Adult Choir. At my first rehearsal, I was placed in the tenor section next to staff singer Chris Thomas, a strategic move by my choir director/mom. As a 14-year-old high school freshman, I was quite nervous. I did not want to mess up and embarrass myself in front of my new section because then they would think I was the absolute worst singer in the world, right? Those fears evaporated though, as I was warmly welcomed to Calvary Choir and to the tenor section. Over that year, I grew close to my fellow tenors, culminating in the Calvary Bristol trip of 2018, one of the best weeks of my life.

However, when my voice decided it no longer wished to sing the high decants with the tenor section, I became a bass at the start of my sophomore year. I was excited to finally move all the way down the vocal ladder, but I was sad to leave the tenors and honestly a little nervous to hit reset and join a different section. But just as I had been welcomed before into the tenor section, I was received by the basses like I had always been one. For three years, these men provided me with laughs, insight, and conversation every Wednesday and Sunday. But whatever section, Calvary Choir and its members have loved me by welcoming me into their family, and I have loved every moment of making music with them for the glory of God.

Not only have I experienced love at Calvary, but I have also learned to love here, specifically through service with EYC. For three consecutive summers, we travelled to

Nashville to participate in COLLIDE, a mission trip and camp mashup with other youth groups in the area. There, we worked in community gardens and on beautification projects, and we visited the elderly and Thistle Farms headquarters. We also ate with those experiencing homelessness, and, as middle schoolers, we confronted the fact that there are a lot of people who are less fortunate than us. In 2018, we went to San Augustine, Texas, and spent an entire week constructing the foundation of a house for a family that had lost theirs due to Hurricane Harvey. Through EYC's mission trips and the guidance of our many present and past youth leaders, I have learned that an integral part of love is the act of service.

So as I head off to Wake Forest in August (go Deacs), I take Calvary's commandment to love with me, having been loved and having learned how to love here. Calvary has shown me that some of the purest and most gracious acts of love are welcoming and serving thy neighbor. I am forever grateful for my time at Calvary: for the choir (turn around and acknowledge them), the youth and its leaders, and all my lessons learned. I only hope that I can give the world that unique, Episcopal love that y'all have given me.

EMLYN POLATTY

I have a little bit of a confession to make; I never learned my commandments. I honestly could not tell you how I managed to become a confirmed episcopalian without knowing the big 10 rules all Christians should know, but here I am. Now, I did everyone the liberty of googling these commandments for the sake of the sermon, and may I say I'm doing fairly well! I mean, almost 18 years of life without theft, adultery, or murder is no small feat. I have most definitely taken the Lord's name in vain once or twice, but hate the sin love the sinner. In fact, that's what I'm here to talk about today. Love.

For those of you that haven't had the pleasure, my name is Emlyn Polatty and I'm a senior at White Station High School. I play cello in the orchestra, manage the school paper, and I'm an avid participant in high school theatre. I've been a regular here at Calvary since the sixth grade, and was confirmed here my sophomore year. Next fall, I will be heading off to New Orleans to attend Tulane University (roll wave), and before I go, I wanted to reflect a little bit on my faith journey.

Originally baptised methodist, I grew up attending Trinity United Methodist church. I've always been a bit...of a questioner. I remember one Sunday, I marched my seven year old pink smock wearing self up the pastor and asked, how was God born? Needless to say I was not very satisfied with his lack of answer.

Then, as I entered middle school, my family moved our home church to Calvary, the church my dad attended when he first moved to Memphis. At age 11, I definitely had a lot of questions about God. Was God real? Would God accept me for who I was? Could God help me even if I wasn't always a good person? Even if I made mistakes? When you're that young, everything is still very black and white. People are good or bad, and though there is forgiveness, there is no in between. I worried about everything, and God is a big part of that everything, so I definitely worried about my relationship with Him.

Around this same time, my dad started his journey to sobriety through the Alcoholics Anonymous program. Getting sober is no easy feat. Now I know that addiction is an illness, and recovery can only be taken one day at a time, but back then, I had homework to do and boys to impress, so I didn't quite process what my family was going through. Two years later, my parents decided to end their marriage. I was absolutely devastated. I wondered, could it have been my fault? What did we do wrong? Is it because of dad's drinking?

Addiction is perceived to be a pretty big mistake. Alcoholics and other addicts are seen as a product of their poor choices, and are treated as beneath others in our society. These views permeated my 13 year old mind, and I did what I do best. I questioned them.

As my dad went through his 12 step program, he became very spiritual. He was involved at Calvary through beekeeping and the lenten preaching series, and he even participated in local sweat lodges. He read book after book by Richard Rohr and Brene Brown and other critical authors who help bring people back to themselves. And he reflected.

My dad and I have always been very close, and anytime I had a question or a doubt about God, I knew he would have an answer, or at least an open ear. He never claimed to know much, but his advice is always spot on. And dad always told me about love. He would tell me that as Christians, we are meant to love God as ourselves, and love our neighbors as we want to be loved, that upon these two truths all laws should be made.

Today, we hear those commandments a little differently. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." As I sat down to write this sermon, I asked myself, what did love look like in a year like 2020? How is love changing for the future?

I never stopped loving my dad. Even when he was no longer some perfect knight in shining armor, there was no question in my mind that I loved him just as much if not more. I'm proud of my dad for his struggle, and I'm proud to see how content he seems to be today. At the end of the day, love is grace. Endless, undeserved, unexplainable grace for ourselves and others, for our quirks and mistakes. Grace.

If you take one thing away from this sermon, I want it to be that my sermon was freaking amazing. If you take a second thing away from this sermon, I want it to be that you're allowed to hold love for people even when society tells you their lives are a mistake. That's part of being human. We mess up, we ask for forgiveness, and hopefully we do better. So let's do better and give folks a little grace. Thank you.